



South Carolina River News



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River Management

Law Enforcement on South Carolina's Rivers

by Lt. Colonel Alvin Wright, Director of Field Operations
SC DNR, Law Enforcement Division

A hot and sunny day, and the boat ramp on the Saluda River near Columbia is doing unusually brisk business. Among the crowd waiting to launch their boats - laughing, eating, drinking - move fifteen SC Department of Natural Resources enforcement officers, dressed in swimwear to blend with the weekenders. Part of a saturation detail poised to control the behavior of the thoughtless few who litter our state's public boat landings and ruin all citizens' enjoyment, the officers witness shocking, illegal acts of littering: beer cans routinely thrown into the water and bottles broken on rocks and stumps. From this operation come 30 arrests for littering, possession of marijuana, indecent exposure, and disorderly conduct. The local magistrate is shocked to find his courtroom full on Monday morning!

Another day: DNR District One enforcement officers scrutinize the Chattooga and the North, South and Middle Saluda rivers, targeting fishermen who catch more than their legal limit. During this effort, a startling 20 cases for over the limit of trout result in \$4,000 in fines.

And in the Tailrace Canal, in Berkeley County: DNR officers check three fishermen and discover shortnose sturgeon eggs and live sturgeon in their possession. The officers confiscate the fish, an endangered species, along with the eggs, two gill nets, a large number of nongame fish, and some illegal game fish. US Attorney Ben Hagood and federal agent George Hines join the officers to successfully prosecute the three men.

These cases, and countless others, illustrate the value of the DNR's 250 officers statewide, fully commissioned police officers whose primary mission is to enforce wildlife, fish, boating and littering laws. South Carolina is blessed with hundreds of miles of beautiful rivers, harboring much of the state's resources that the DNR is tasked with enhancing, managing and protecting. Through its officers, the DNR enforcement arm uses a variety of means to ensure that the rivers of

South Carolina are suitable for use by all species, man and wildlife alike.

To deal with litter problems at boat landings and other "hot spots" reported by the public, DNR organizes spring and summer efforts such as the Saluda River saturation patrol mentioned earlier.

To protect South Carolina's fishery resources, officers work with biologists from the DNR fisheries section, one of the finest in the Southeast. In addition to the Upstate and coastal operations cited, officers focus extensive attention on individuals who are robbing the resource. Size limits for striped bass are enforced on all rivers, particularly the Santee, Congaree, Wateree and Saluda. Commercial catfishermen are monitored to ensure compliance with commercial fishing laws. The officers also help commercial fishermen who report having their hoop nets, trot lines, etc. robbed by other fishermen. To further protect the

resource, DNR officers ensure that all fishermen contribute to managing the fisheries by checking them daily for proper permits and licenses.

Another facet of officers' responsibilities involves making rivers safe places to go boating, canoeing, kayaking, and even swimming. Officers perform routine boating safety patrols, checking for proper safety equipment to assure compliance with all boating laws. Since recreational boating is as common on some rivers as fishing activities, the division has formed a new Boating Safety Action Force (B-SAF) Team to target problem areas and ensure safety is practiced on all waters. This past spring, B-SAF teamed with local officers to concentrate on the Waccamaw River, one of the busiest and most congested rivers in the state. A three-day saturation patrol resulted in 149 cases.

River rescues are performed many times each year with officers risking their lives to brave white- and blackwater to retrieve stranded children and adults from rocks, trees, and exposed islands. On occasion, the DNR helicopter has been used to airlift citizens to safety. When, unavoidably, these situations end in tragedy, the division's AIR (Aquatic Investigations and Recovery) team locates the body or bodies, assignments that sometimes take days

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Lynn Wingard pilots the Lake Murray garbage barge during Beach Sweep/River Sweep '96. As part of the Sweep, 82 volunteers from Lake Murray Homeowners Association removed 534 bags of trash from the lakeshore. For more details on the Sweep, see River Currents on page 4.

A River User's Perspective

A River Enthusiast's Recipe for Trouble-free Rivers

by Louis Nexsen, Owner, Blackwater Adventures

I am privileged to serve as a guide on South Carolina's scenic waterways including the Black River, Upper Cooper River, and Wadboo Creek. My outfitting business, Blackwater Adventures, gives me the opportunity to showcase our natural resources.

We, the guides of our state's waterways, are constantly confronted with the challenges of providing visitors with a safe and informative outing as well as presenting South Carolina's rivers in the best possible focus. All too often, an otherwise memorable tour is tainted by the carelessness, and sometimes the blatant disregard, of others for our God-given natural surroundings.

It begins with a discarded aluminum can here; an accidentally lost paper wrapper there. . . then the remains of a gutted fish or parts of a deer carcass. Before long, a pristine waterway becomes a flowing sewer. Ironically, much of the problem with litter and abuse of our streams is directly attributable to so-called "sportsmen." And even more ironic, during the annual Beach Sweep/River Sweep cleanup campaign, those least responsible for the problem are most attributable to the solution!

To many in the outfitting business, the Beach Sweep/River Sweep ideal never ends. The ongoing process of cleaning up boat landings and waterways consumes more time and effort as the use of a waterway increases.

During an era of leaner tax dollars and already overburdened law enforcement agencies, cleanliness and litter problems can understandably take a back seat to more pressing agendas. However, littering is not the only law enforcement issue on the state's rivers. The unpatrolled solitude of the remote riverfront affords the perfect opportunity for drug trafficking, underage drinking, and vandalism. Areas intended for the recreational use of all become havens for illicit activities.

Certainly, litter control programs such as Beach Sweep/River Sweep go a long way toward revitalizing our natural and recreational areas. However, charity cleanups once a year must be replaced by a more prevailing overall attitude of "Keep it clean and beautiful." If South Carolina is to remain a primary vacation destination for nature-based tourism, a broader based approach needs to be implemented. "Pack-It-In/Pack-It-Out" signs at boat landings and nature trails are an easy way to remind users of their responsibilities. The Adopt-a-Landing program could also be an effective long range tool in confronting the aforementioned problems.

The law enforcement problems at our public access areas cannot be curtailed without local support. This, coupled with aggressive law enforcement and a campaign to educate the public may begin to solve the problems. By nurturing community involvement and involving law enforcement personnel, we can take back our riverfronts. ■

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or weeks to complete. Without a doubt, the most difficult task an officer encounters is advising parents that their child's body has been recovered, or reporting to a wife that her husband has been killed in a boating accident.

DNR officers, who frequently patrol rivers, provide a vital link to the chain that keeps citizens and industries of South Carolina in accord with environmental regulations. They may be the first to notice a fuel spill, illegal discharges from waste treatment plants, sediment buildups, or infractions of the state's Scenic Rivers Act. Recently, one of the biggest diesel fuel spills ever reported took place on the Reedy River in Greenville County. DNR officers assisted other government entities in assessing the situation and used boats and all-terrain equipment to access the remote areas of the river. Their knowledge and skills proved to be most important in getting a bad situation under control in a relatively short time.

The most vital role of the DNR officer is the cultivation of partnerships with all citizen groups that have a common interest in protecting river resources. Citizens guide officers by reporting natural resource violations. Individuals taking the initiative to report these violations, whether they involve fishing, boating, littering, or environmental crime help make DNR officers' efforts effective.

Our officers have earned the respect of local magistrates and community members through their efforts to stop illegal activities that threaten the health of our rivers. We count heavily on the users of all our state's waters, especially our rivers, to police their own. A day on one of South Carolina's rivers has the potential for taking a life or providing a safe, rewarding outdoor experience. The latter is the DNR officer's goal. ■

If you witness a violation or need to contact a DNR officer, the agency has a toll-free hotline (1-800-922-5431) that is manned 24 hours a day, seven days a week. We need your help.

River Naturalist



Sentinel of South Carolina's blackwater rivers, the bald cypress is a unique and majestic member of the redwood family. Defining characteristics include a flattened crown; an enlarged, buttressed trunk; and cone-shaped knees projecting upwards from the submerged roots. The bark is brownish-gray and fibrous. Each fall, the featherlike needles of the cypress turn a deep rust color before blowing away on the winter winds. Join Barry Beasley for a paddle through a cypress swamp in Field Trip on page 3.

A Landowner's Perspective

Living By the River

by Anne Carraway, Lynches River Advisory Council

My family has owned property on the Lynches River in Sumter County for more than fifty years. As a child, I enjoyed going to the river with my daddy to sit on the banks and fish. I looked forward to swimming in the river and having family picnics on the shore. Over the years, I witnessed my father's hard work and determination as he endeavored to own this river-bordering land and turn it into a profitable farming operation. These treasured memories make me determined to see that this land is protected and preserved for the generations to come.

For years, our land was open to public use. We did not mind for neighbors, friends, and

acquaintances to cross our property to get to the river. Unfortunately, however, this privilege was abused, and it became necessary for us to post the property. We leased the land to a hunt club and erected a gate. By doing this, we hoped to regain control of the property. It saddens me to say that people made their own road around the gate and through our planted crops! Needless to say, this damaged the crops and property resulting in a monetary loss. Trespassing, along with the accompanying vandalism and littering, has forced me to consider taking legal action.

I feel that a lot of people have lost their respect for the property of others and are poor stewards of the

land and river. These people do not love the land as we (the landowners) do and are not responsible for any share of the upkeep or taxes. Moreover, they make it necessary for us to be burdened with the expense of liability insurance.

The river and land surrounding it are gifts from God. I would prefer to have no restrictions and simply allow people to enjoy the river. However, taking my past experiences into consideration, I have to admit that I am not in favor of opening private property to public use.

As a river-bordering landowner, it is my responsibility to see that the river and its resources are protected. I hope that my family and the generations to come will be good stewards: preserving and protecting the land, valuing it and respecting it for the gift that it is, and loving and enjoying it for years to come. ■

Field Trip

Little Salkehatchie - Combahee: Paddling Through the Swamp

by Barry R. Beasley, Manager, SCDNR River Conservation Program

It was a cool November morning when our party of four met at Sniders Crossroads in south Colleton County for a three day trip on the Little Salkehatchie and Combahee Rivers. I had been on the Little Salkehatchie on several occasions in jonboats, but only for day trips of relatively short distances. All four of us were excited about exploring a new river even though we realized getting lost in the braided channels of the Salkehatchie system was a real possibility.

We set up our shuttle, leaving a car at the ramp at the Highway 17A bridge. With food and gear for a cold weather trip, we slid our loaded canoes into the black waters of the Little Salkehatchie at the put-in at SC 63. We quickly drifted into the deep swamp and solitude of the Little Salkehatchie. It had been a relatively dry fall, so we found the river confined to defined channels in the swamp. I had been on the Little Salkehatchie when the swamp was nothing but water with no high ground in sight; however, we were greeted with low water.

In the first few miles below the put-in, the river flowed through some small lakes but basically maintained a single channel. As we drifted further into the swamp, the runs became smaller and began to braid. We followed the runs with the most current and did not encounter dead end

sloughs. In the late afternoon we came to a small area containing some high ground and prudently made camp. Barred owls serenaded us as we spent a wonderful night surrounded by the wilderness of this magnificent bottomland hardwood forest.

The following day was an incredible day of paddling. We floated through runs not much wider than our canoes, the black water sparkling and clear in the filtered sunlight. Remnant cypress stood in the forest to give us a glimpse of the way the forest appeared to the native Americans and first Europeans hundreds of years ago. The interior of one such cypress had long ago rotted away; however, the tree was so large all four of us were able to stand inside the remaining shell. Otters played in the river, and owls watched in silence as we floated by their homes.

The second night we camped on a beautiful sandbar not far below the confluence of the Big and Little Salkehatchie. The upper Combahee is one of the most spectacular stretches of blackwater I have paddled. The river was narrow, swift and clear. Fall leaves covered the sandbars and floated with us downstream.

As we approached the I-95 bridges through the swamp we encountered the unwelcome noise of traffic. The river began to gradually widen and eventually we encountered a few scattered houses

on some bluffs along the river. We also had to pull over an occasional log blocking the channel.

In the early afternoon we reluctantly arrived at the boat ramp on 17A, our trip was at an end. South Carolina contains many beautiful miles along its blackwater rivers and through its bottomland swamps. Of all of these river miles, the 16 miles through the swamps of the Little Salkehatchie and Combahee Rivers are a paddler's delight.

This trip was taken a couple of years ago, and I understand there have been changes along the river. I want to go back and see if it's the same and spend more time in this swamp. Not many places like the Salkehatchie River still exist. I hope we can work together to create cooperative approaches that will maintain these magnificent swamps. ■



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River Currents

Guess who's new on the NET? We are! The SC River Conservation Program has its own homepage! Be sure to check us out to find out more about scenic river projects, watershed and corridor planning, and river education. One of the most exciting features of our homepage will be the bulletin board—a central location to post or find out about river happenings throughout the state! We hope you will use this site to share or get information about river projects, conservation efforts, upcoming meetings, river activities— anything of river-related newsworthiness! To visit the **SC River Conservation Program homepage**, go to <http://www.dnr.state.sc.us>. Catch us on the NET!

The final report of the **Edisto River Basin Project**, *Managing Resources for a Sustainable Future*, is now available. (We really mean it this time!) This report contains management recommendations for the natural, cultural, and economic resources of the 3,120 square mile drainage basin. It also details the methods and maps employed in the project's evaluation of the basin's resources. Currently, project participants are transforming the recommendations from plan to reality by prioritizing the recommendations and devising an implementation plan. To become involved or for more information, please contact the Edisto River Basin Project staff at (803) 737-0800.

Beach Sweep/River Sweep is an annual, one-day cleanup of the state's waterways cosponsored by the **SC Department of Natural**

Resources and SC Sea Grant Consortium. The seventh annual Sweep was held on Saturday, September 21, 1996. More than 6,900 volunteers teamed up to remove 67 tons of litter and debris from the state's waterways. Cleanups were held on 75 inland waterways from the rollicking Whitewater River in the mountains to the shores of Lake Marion to lowcountry rivers such as the Combahee and Coosawhatchie. Thanks to all who participated in the Sweep!

Through the new **Adopt-a-Landing** program, groups can select a favorite boat landing and keep it clean on a year-round basis. Participating groups are recognized with a sign at the landing. Recent additions to the Adopt-a-Landing team include **OPS Earth Club, Carolina Heritage Outfitters, and Carquest Auto Parts of Turbeville**.

During September, **Friends of the Reedy River** stenciled 60 storm drains with the message: "Dump no waste/Drains to Reedy River." The warnings were painted on drains in Cleveland Park, County Square, and at West End Market. The group's goal is to paint every drain that feeds into the Reedy, a number that could reach well into the thousands.

The **Catawba River** is once again the spotlight of community attention. The county councils of Chester, Lancaster, and York counties created the **Tri-County Wastewater Committee** to address wastewater issues in the tri-county region and beyond. The committee will formulate recommendations on cost-effective approaches to the collection, management, transportation, and

treatment of wastewater. Since the Catawba River is a shared community resource, the committee is actively seeking involvement from individuals and entities interested in the river's future. At their most recent meeting in November in Rock Hill, the committee gathered public input and created sub-committees to tackle specific wastewater management issues. For more information, contact Mike Medlin at (803) 385-5123.

Barry Beasley, Manager of the SC River Conservation Program, was recently elected **Vice President** of the newly formed **River Management Society**, a national professional organization for those involved in the management of river resources. The River Management Society is the product of the merger of the former American River Management Society and The River Federation. Congratulations, Barry—we know that you will represent South Carolina well!

The **Charleston County Park and Recreation Commission** will sponsor the **East Coast Canoe & Kayak Symposium** from April 18 - 20, 1997 at James Island County Park. The Symposium will feature lectures, on-water classes, demonstrations, exhibits, and trips that will appeal to the novice as well as the experienced paddler. Call Holly Ann Luther at (803) 762-2172 for more information.

Do **YOU** know of any river-related news or upcoming events? If so, send a short description to Becky Rideout for inclusion in **River Currents** or call and give me the scoop at (803) 737-0800.



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